# Academic Essay: The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies Applied to English Teaching

**Introduction**

The teaching of foreign languages has evolved significantly, incorporating new methodologies that reflect social, cultural, and technological transformations. In this context, the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies emerges as an innovative approach that acknowledges the importance of multiple modes of communication and the diversity of media in which language develops. The central idea of this essay is to argue that applying the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in the English language classroom not only broadens students' linguistic repertoire but also fosters greater critical and autonomous participation in Participatory Culture, as discussed by Jenkins (2009). Specifically, this essay presents a brief result from the Master's research conducted within the Graduate Program in Language Studies at UNIFESP (Federal University of São Paulo), where the production of fanfiction in a pedagogical context provides significant affordances for linguistic-discursive learning.

The concept of multiliteracies, introduced by the New London Group (1996), emphasizes the need for a pedagogy that embraces diverse and complex contemporary modes of communication. This theory aligns with an approach to teaching additional languages that values not only the acquisition of linguistic-discursive skills but also the ability to interact effectively and critically in a digitally mediated world. In this sense, fanfiction, as a focal genre within Participatory Culture, represents an ideal pedagogical platform for applying multiliteracies principles. By fostering creative writing based on intertextuality, fanfiction allows students to explore their linguistic abilities while developing skills in critical analysis and media content production. The didactic sequence, or unit, proposed in the master’s research[[1]](#footnote-1) exemplifies how fanfiction creation can be used in English classes to not only develop language skills but also facilitate affordances that promote a critical understanding of the world.

This essay will first explore the theoretical foundations of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. It will then present the study on fanfiction in English language classes, examining the educational benefits of producing fanfiction with intertextual links to classic literary works, such as George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, and discussing how this approach can transform traditional pedagogical practices. Finally, it will address a discussion on the affordances that fanfiction writing, viewed through the lens of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, offers.

**Development**

The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies is based on the notion that traditional literacy, focused solely on written text, is no longer sufficient in a globalized and media-diverse world (Rojo, 2013). This pedagogy recognizes the existence of a multitude of communication forms—including images, gestures, sounds, and visual elements—that are essential for contemporary social interaction. According to the New London Group (1996), language teaching should address these new forms of literacy, promoting multimodal competence among students. In this sense, multiliteracies do not refer only to the ability to read and write in different formats but also to the skill of critically and reflectively navigating between different semiotic systems.

The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies emerges as a critical and transformative response to the new educational demands of the contemporary world. This concept, as discussed by Rojo (2012), proposes a break from the centrality of traditional and hegemonic cultures by including pedagogical practices in schools that encompass a multiplicity of marginalized languages and cultures. This movement reflects the need for a new ethic and aesthetic that addresses the social and cultural demands of an increasingly globalized and multimodal world. According to Rojo (2012, p. 19), this new configuration of texts, circulating in both print and digital media, “requires a pedagogical approach that takes into account the semiotic elements responsible for meaning making, which is the basis of multiliteracies.”

The New London Group's (NLG) manifesto, drafted in 1996 and translated into Portuguese in 2021 and cited as *Grupo Nova Londres* (GNL), marks a turning point in defining the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. It not only highlights the relevance of pedagogical practices that embrace cultural and linguistic diversity but also challenges traditional pedagogy based on monolingual and monocultural literacy. The NLG (1996/2021) argues that the focus of pedagogy should be on full and equitable social participation, promoting a vision of literacy that aligns with the complexities of contemporary societies characterized by cultural and linguistic plurality. By proposing this approach, the NLG seeks to broaden the traditional pedagogical scope, allowing the teaching-learning process to involve transformative practices.

Another crucial point in this discussion is the idea that multiliteracies go beyond understanding texts merely as linguistic expressions. As noted by Megale and Liberali (2019), this pedagogy implies a “meaning-making process through multiliteracy,” where individuals are invited not only to interact with texts but also to transform themselves and act critically in the world through these interactions. In this sense, the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies proposes an education in which the student is not a mere passive recipient of knowledge but an active agent capable of reinterpreting and redesigning meanings, influencing their social environment.

In this context, the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies is a powerful tool for promoting more inclusive and critical education. By expanding students’ cultural and linguistic repertoires, this approach not only recognizes the multiplicity of voices and perspectives in the school environment but also offers students the opportunity to engage in practices that prepare them for fuller and more equitable social participation. Thus, multiliteracy becomes not only a teaching instrument but also a practice of social and cultural emancipation (NLG, 2021).

In the English language classroom, the application of this pedagogy is manifested in various forms, one of the most effective being the production of multimodal texts, such as fanfiction. Sachs (2019) defines fanfiction as narratives created by fans based on pre-existing characters and universes, which enable students not only to practice writing in English but also to actively participate in Participatory Culture. Jenkins (2006/2009) describes this culture as one in which individuals are not merely passive consumers of media content but active participants in its production and reconfiguration.

The fanfiction genre has become an important pedagogical tool for integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) into teaching, especially through the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. This textual genre, which arises from popular and media culture, enables fans (often young people) to reinterpret, expand, and recreate narratives from literary works or widely circulated media products, reinforcing the practice of intertextuality. This practice is not new, as it dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries, when authors already rewrote literary narratives, creating alternative versions of the original works. However, the advent of digital fanfiction has expanded the scale of this practice, promoting Participatory Culture (Jenkins, 1992), where media consumers also become producers.

Fanfiction production exemplifies strategies of recontextualization, refocusing, and emotional intensification, among others, that allow fans to expand fictional universes and address aspects they consider unsatisfactory in canonical narratives. These activities reinforce the notion that fans are not merely passive spectators but active agents in creating new meanings and interpretations. In educational contexts, using fanfiction can bring students closer to literary works, promoting broader digital and literary literacy. By recreating narratives, students exercise authorship and creativity, critically engaging with texts.

Furthermore, fanfiction production is intrinsically linked to Participatory Culture and the empowerment of fans as content producers, reinforcing principles studied by Jenkins (1992). The author further highlights that, in writing fanfiction, fans question and critique the ideologies present in mass culture productions, challenging traditional authorship. Thus, by including this textual genre in the educational setting, a space is created for developing critical awareness about cultural production, allowing students to reflect on themes such as power, representation, and narrative.

Finally, analyzing fanfiction production with intertextual links to literary works, such as those created with *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sherlock Holmes* (Bamman & Milli, 2016), we observe that young writers highlight aspects of the stories that the original canons did not address. Thus, the fanfiction genre, besides promoting creativity and digital literacy, also provides a means for the critical exploration of narratives, allowing students to broaden their reading and writing abilities while actively participating in literary and media culture.

The creation of fanfiction in English class, within the scope of the mentioned master’s research, provided a space where students could interact with the canonical text by George Orwell—*Animal Farm*. Intertextuality not only reinforced understanding of the original text but also allowed students to apply the linguistic and discursive knowledge acquired in class in a creative and meaningful way, while reinterpreting the work through their own experiences and perspectives. In the master’s research, we observed how ninth-grade students (from a private school in São Paulo, in 2023) who participated in fanfiction production significantly expanded their linguistic and discursive repertoires. Analyzing their narratives, it became clear that fanfiction facilitated critical appropriation of language and the development of multimodal competencies, as we understood through the study of thematic content and the principles of Socio-Discursive Interactionism (Bronckart, 1999; 2008; 2017).

The analysis of fanfiction in the research was grounded in Socio-Discursive Interactionism (SDI) theory, as proposed by Bronckart (1999). We used an analytical framework that allows for understanding the thematic content present in students' productions, as well as examining questionnaire responses exploring thematic choices and the discourses influencing these decisions. The primary focus of the methodology was data interpretation, seeking to understand how students perceive their autonomy and critical thinking in the English language learning process, particularly in the context of writing fanfiction. This perspective was central to our analysis, as genres are understood as tools that students use to interact in various social situations. The connection between written production and the affordances offered by the learning environment highlights, above all, the relevance of social interaction in building linguistic knowledge.

Additionally, we aligned our analysis with the principles of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, as discussed by Rojo (2012). Based on the results obtained from the didactic sequence and the students' productions, we examined whether there was an increase in critical thinking and the quality of the fanfictions. Bronckart’s (1999) method of analysis allowed us to investigate not only the structural characteristics of the texts but also the context of their production, considering social and subjective aspects that influence thematic choices. This is crucial to understand how students appropriate the possibilities offered by the educational environment to express their voices and narratives.

In summary, the analysis procedures adopted in this master’s research provided a comprehensive view of students' textual productions, allowing us to explore the interactions between context, content, and enunciative voices. By using the theoretical tools of ISD and the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, we sought to understand the nuances of the fanfictions produced by students, revealing the dynamics that shape their learning and engagement with the English language. These analyses are essential to assess the impact of pedagogical practices on students’ writing experiences and the learning opportunities that unfold in the classroom.

Regarding fanfiction production, beyond linguistic and discursive benefits, the genre production within the context of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies offers affordances, or possibilities for action, that promote a more autonomous and critical learning. Gibson (2015) and Van Lier (2000) explain that affordances in language learning are those opportunities that the environment provides for interaction and skill development. In the case of fanfiction production, three main types of affordances were identified: environmental, technological, and linguistic. Environmental affordances include access to digital platforms where students can share and receive feedback on their texts, while technological affordances facilitate the use of online editing and publishing tools. Finally, linguistic affordances refer to the opportunities students have to experiment with the language and develop greater fluency and accuracy in English.

The research conducted in this master’s study, where students published their fanfictions on a blog and participated in an electronic questionnaire about the writing process of this genre, confirmed that these affordances played a crucial role in the learning process. The responses to the questionnaire applied during data collection showed that students perceived the provided affordances as an essential component of their learning, highlighting the freedom of expression and the ability to interact critically with the original texts.

It is worth emphasizing the concept of affordance, introduced by Gibson (2015), which refers to the opportunities that the environment offers individuals, enabling perception and action. This idea extends to the field of language learning, where affordance is understood as the potential that different contexts and linguistic interactions have to foster meaningful learning experiences. According to Paiva (2009), affordances can be seen as "possibilities," which vary according to the learning context, whether in immersion situations, foreign language classes, or second language contexts. This variation highlights the importance of considering the environment as an active agent in the educational process.

The relationship between the learner and their environment is fundamental for the perception of affordances. Van Lier (2004) argues that the dynamics between the elements of the environment and its inhabitants offer interaction opportunities that are recognized when they become relevant. In a language learning environment, this implies that students must not only participate in speech events but also (re)create situations and act on them, thus promoting their linguistic development. The presence of pedagogical practices that stimulate these interactions is essential to ensure that learners actively engage with the language and the context they are in.

Beyond environmental affordances, Silva (2015) introduces the idea of technological and linguistic affordances, highlighting how digital tools and linguistic resources can enrich the learning experience. Technological affordances include the use of applications and online platforms that facilitate language practice and interaction. On the other hand, linguistic affordances are divided into levels of structure, meaning, and interaction management, emphasizing that learning is a semiotic process mediated by multiple factors. This multifaceted approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how learning opportunities manifest and how students can appropriate them.

Finally, the research by Aronin and Singleton (2012) expands the discussion on affordances, suggesting that they have social and individual dimensions. Linguistic and metalinguistic awareness plays a crucial role in the perception of affordances, as each learner brings with them a unique set of experiences and prior knowledge that shapes their interaction with the language. Thus, affordances in language learning are not only properties of the environment but are also intrinsically linked to the individual potential of learners, who co-create the conditions of their learning. This holistic understanding can inform pedagogical practices that meet the diverse needs of students in language learning environments.

**Final Considerations**

The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies emerges as an essential approach to contemporary language teaching, especially in the context of English language instruction. Today's world, marked by constant technological, media, and cultural transformation, requires education to keep up with these changes and integrate multiple forms of literacy to prepare students for the complexity of social interactions. As demonstrated throughout this essay, the application of this pedagogy, particularly through the production of fanfictions, proves to be an effective strategy for engaging students in language practices that go beyond the traditional, incorporating multimodal and intertextual aspects that expand students' linguistic-discursive repertoire.

The creation of fanfictions within the school context, as explored in this master’s research, offers fertile ground for students to develop both their writing skills and their critical thinking and autonomy. The fanfiction genre, within the context of Participatory Culture as described by Jenkins (2009), enables students not only to reinterpret canonical texts, such as George Orwell’s literary work *Animal Farm*, but also to create new narratives that reflect their own experiences and perspectives. This creative process, based on intertextuality, not only facilitates the acquisition of linguistic competencies but also fosters critical reading of texts, promoting a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the content addressed.

In addition to linguistic benefits, fanfiction production within the context of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies promotes affordances, that is, learning opportunities that go beyond the traditional classroom. Environmental, technological, and linguistic affordances allow students to explore new forms of interaction with the language, using digital tools and actively participating in online spaces where they can share their creations and receive feedback. These opportunities are crucial for the development of a more autonomous learning, where students become active agents in their process of linguistic and critical development.

Another relevant aspect is the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in strengthening the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. By integrating these digital tools into the teaching process, as was done in the didactic sequence of this researcher’s master’s study, students are exposed to a learning environment that mirrors contemporary social practices, facilitating the transition between the school world and the digital universe they inhabit. The practice of writing and publishing fanfictions on blogs, for example, allows students to practice writing in a meaningful and contextualized way, using English in a functional and relevant manner to their lives.

Linguistic affordances, in turn, are evidenced in the freedom that students have to experiment with language, testing different grammatical structures, vocabulary, and writing styles. The intertextuality present in the creation of fanfictions, by working with pre-existing texts, encourages creativity and innovation, while promoting a deeper understanding of the discursive and stylistic norms of the English language. Through practice, students are encouraged to think critically about the writing process, becoming more aware of their linguistic choices and the implications of these choices in meaning-making.

The analysis of students' fanfictions also revealed the importance of the sociocultural context in narrative development. Students' thematic and stylistic choices reflected not only their interpretations of canonical texts but also their personal experiences, demonstrating how creative writing can be a powerful tool for identity expression and reflection on social and cultural issues. This aspect reinforces the idea that the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies is not just an approach aimed at language teaching, but also an emancipatory practice that allows students to critically position themselves in relation to the world around them.

In light of the discussion, the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, applied through fanfiction production, offers a promising pathway for reconfiguring English language teaching. By embracing the diversity of communication modes and promoting a more inclusive and critical education, this approach expands learning possibilities, preparing students to act effectively and autonomously in an increasingly complex and multimodal world. The presented research demonstrated that by integrating fanfiction production into the pedagogical environment, it is possible not only to promote linguistic development but also to foster critical and participatory engagement that transforms the teaching-learning experience, making it more meaningful and connected to contemporary realities.

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